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14. ABSTRACT This paper will explore the hypothesis that first-term Marines, mainly E-4 and below, are making ill-informed marital choices that are leading to a high rate of divorce among Marines, E-5 and below. These divorces, in turn, are having a significant negative impact on two areas of unit operational readiness: Loss of unit personnel due to suicide and loss of time to train. This paper will propose a four-part solution that will equip first-term Marines to make better marital decisions: 1) Mandatory annual training for all Marines, E-5 and below, on the realities of marriage in the Marine Corps; 2) mandatory pre- and post-marital checklists that will compel first-term Marines desiring to marry to seriously consider if they are ready to marry and alert them to the local programs that can help them if they marry; 3) an information campaign from senior enlisted leaders that promotes good marital choices and marital fidelity; and, 4) an on-line educational presentation that gives fiancés of Marines a realistic depiction of married life in the Marine Corps. First-term Marines who are better-informed should make better marital choices which, in turn, should translate into a significant decrease in the rate of divorce among Marines, E-5 and below. Consequently, a significant decrease in divorce should improve unit operational readiness by reducing the number of Marines lost to suicide and allowing more time available to train.					
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MASTERS OF MILITARY STUDIES

THE IMPACT OF DIVORCE AMONG MARINES, E-5 AND BELOW, ON UNIT
OPERATIONAL READINESS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTERS OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Executive Summary

Title: “The Impact of Divorce Among Marines, E-5 and Below, on Unit Operational Readiness”

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Thesis: First-term Marines, mainly E-4 and below, are making ill-informed marital choices that are leading to a high rate of divorce among Marines, E-5 and below. These divorces are having a significant negative impact on two elements of unit operational readiness: Loss of personnel and loss of time to train.

Discussion: This paper will explore the hypothesis that first-term Marines (mostly E-4 and below Marines), are making ill-informed marital choices that are leading to a high rate of divorce among Marines, E-5 and below. These divorces, in turn, are a significant problem to the Marine Corps because they are having a significant negative impact on two elements of unit operational readiness: Loss of unit personnel due to suicide and loss of time to train.

This paper will explore what the problem is and what it is not. Once the problem is properly problem-framed, this paper will quantify the significant negative impact this problem is having on unit operational readiness in terms of loss of personnel and loss of time to train. This paper will then attempt to provide clarity as to *why* first-term Marines are making ill-informed marital decisions that, in turn, put Marines, E-5 and below, at a high risk for divorce.

This paper proposes a four-part solution that will equip first-term Marines to make better marital decisions: 1) Mandatory annual training for all Marines, E-5 and below, on the realities of marriage in the Marine Corps; 2) mandatory pre- and post-marital checklists that will compel first-term Marines desiring to marry to seriously consider if they are ready to marry and alert them to the local programs that can help them if they marry; 3) an information campaign from senior enlisted leaders that promotes good marital choices and marital fidelity; and, 4) an online educational presentation that gives fiancés of Marines a realistic depiction of married life in the Marine Corps. This paper will conclude with five additional reasons why this proposed solution should be implemented.

Conclusion: The solution to this problem of divorce is to equip first-term Marines to make better-informed marital choices through mandatory training. First-term Marines who are better-informed should make better marital choices that, in turn, should translate into a significant decrease in the rate of divorce among Marines, E-5 and below. Consequently, a significant decrease in divorce should improve unit operational readiness by reducing the number of Marines lost to suicide and allowing more time available to train. Another likely benefit is money saved due to fewer first-term Marines getting married because they are persuaded by this mandatory training that they are not ready for marriage.

DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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Preface

One of my greatest joys as a chaplain is to help Marines of all ages prepare to succeed in marriage. The opposite is also true: It is tragic for me to watch one young Marine after another jump headlong into marriage with no preparation or real understanding of what it takes to succeed in marriage. Predictably, many of the marriages among young Marines fail, leaving behind a wake of brokenness and pain surpassed only by death in combat. I sense that Marine Corps leaders want to get “left of the boom” on this problem of divorce, but they are unsure of the way forward. My hope is that this paper is a helpful step forward in understanding this tragedy and significantly reducing it.

To my friends in academia: This is not your typical thesis that drills down on a particular question. Instead, it is a hybrid of a literature review, a call to action, and original research. I intentionally crafted it this way in order that it would accomplish its intended purpose: To compel Marine Corps leaders to prepare first-term Marines for marriage in order to reduce divorce. Much more research on this topic still needs to be done. It is my hope that this paper will influence you to do the research that I have neither the expertise nor the resources to do.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank Cynthia Evans and the rest of the Grey Research Center staff for helping me obtain the many research materials I could have never gotten on my own. I am grateful to subject matter experts like Dr. Scott Stanley and Dr. Benjamin Karney, whose advice profoundly impacted my understanding of marriage and divorce among young adults. I also want to thank a host of readers who took time out of their very busy schedules to provide me with invaluable feedback on how to improve this paper: Lieutenant Colonel Brett Clark, Dr. Keita Franklin, Chaplain Milton Gianulis, Brigadier General Robert Hedelund, Chaplain Guy Lee, Chaplain Craig Muehler, and Brigadier General Daniel O'Donohue. I also want to thank my academic advisor, Dr. Rebecca Johnson, for giving up a great deal of her free time to edit this paper and pushing me to write (and re-write) to the best of my ability. I also want to thank my dear wife, Aundrea, who sacrificed many hours to allow me to research and write, edited (and re-edited) this paper, and encouraged me throughout the process. Lastly, I want to thank my Heavenly Father who generously gave me the wisdom and the strength that I needed exactly when I needed it.

If a disease were to afflict the majority of a populace, spreading pain and dysfunction throughout all age groups, we would be frantically searching for reasons and solutions. Yet this particular scourge has become so endemic that it is virtually ignored. The scourge is divorce, an oddly neglected topic in a nation that has the worst record of broken marriages in the entire world.
George Gallup, Jr.ⁱ

In conversations with Marine Corps leaders over the last 10 years, the author has noticed a wide variance on how they view marriage and divorce among first-term Marines. Some view it as a significant problem that cannot be fixed because the only solution – preventing them from getting married in the first place – has been tried and failed. After hearing from chaplains serving with Marines that first-term marriages were causing a disproportionate amount of problems for the individual Marines and their commands, Marine Corps Commandant General Carl Mundy issued ALMAR 226/93 in 1993 banning married individuals from enlisting into the Marine Corps and ordering first-term Marines not to get married.ⁱⁱ This ALMAR ignited a political firestorm which culminated in Secretary of Defense, Les Aspin, ordering General Mundy to immediately rescind the order.ⁱⁱⁱ So in the minds of many Marine leaders, if they cannot order their first-term Marines not to get married, nothing else can be done to prevent them from getting divorced.

Other Marine leaders view divorce among first-term Marines as a “wicked” problem too complicated to understand and solve.^{iv} In the minds of these leaders, human interaction within marriage and divorce likens to Clausewitz’s description of war: Disproportionate and unpredictable responses are the norm, making problem-framing difficult and solutions elusive.^v Unanswered questions abound: Are there indicators that can accurately predict that a marriage has a high risk of failure *before* the wedding day? If there are such indicators, are they universal? What is the right course of action to influence a first-term Marine’s marital choice when

preventing him/her from getting married is not an option? With so much to do and little time to do it, commanders believe they cannot afford to give up the time or energy to attempt to problem-frame and solve this “wicked” problem.

There is a segment of Marine Corp leadership who do not view divorce among first-term Marines as a significant problem because they do not view divorce *itself* as a significant problem that needs fixing. This is not to say that these leaders necessarily view divorce in a positive light; most of them would likely say it is an unfortunate and unpleasant experience for the individual, the family, and, at times, for the command, but does not warrant further command attention. Divorce, in their estimation, is common in the Marine Corps because it is common throughout society, and will continue to occur regardless of intervention. They conclude that the best approach, then, is to simply endure the fall-out from the divorce of first-term Marines as “the cost of doing business.”

The common point of agreement among Marine leaders about divorce among first-term Marines is the assumption that nothing can or needs to be done to reduce it. This assumption has led to what Lieutenant Colonel Aaron Weiss accurately describes in his 2012 Gazette article, “Equal Pay for First-term Marines” as the pervading policy towards first-term Marines getting married: “Since Gen[eral] Carl E. Mundy’s failed attempt to reduce first-term marriage in 1993, Marine Corps leadership has followed a laissez faire policy when it comes to enlisted marriage, even in the case of first-term Marines.”^{vi}

The purpose of this paper, then, is to replace this “hands off” policy with engaged leadership by arguing that divorce among Marines, E-5 and below, is a significant problem that can be better understood and significantly reduced. More specifically, this paper will explore the hypothesis that first-term Marines (mostly E-4 and below) are making ill-informed marital

choices which are leading to a high rate of divorce among Marines, E-5 and below. In turn, these divorces are a significant problem because they having a significant negative impact on two areas of unit operational readiness: Loss of unit personnel and loss of time to train.^{vii} The solution to this problem, then, is to equip first-term Marines to make better-informed marital choices which will decrease the rate of divorce among Marines, E-5 and below, and will, in turn, significantly improve unit operational readiness.

This paper divides into five sections. The first section frames what the problem is and what it is not. The second section will quantify the significant negative impact this problem is having on unit operational readiness. The third section provides clarity as to *why* first-term Marines are making ill-informed marital decisions that, in turn, put Marines, E-5 and below, at a high risk for divorce. The fourth section proposes a solution that will equip first-term Marines to make better marital decisions. This section also includes several reasons why this proposed solution should be implemented. The fifth section concludes with recommendations for areas of further research on this topic.

Before diving into problem-framing, the author must make several points of clarification in order to avoid reader confusion. First, the reader may have already noticed that the author refers to “first-term” Marines when discussing marriage and “Marines, E-5 and below,” when discussing divorce. The author defines “first-term Marines” as Marines in their first enlistment, the majority of whom are E-4 and below. The reason the author makes the distinction between these two groups is because divorce rates for Marines is highest among Non-Commissioned Officers (E-4 and E-5), and the average length of marriage among enlisted Marines which ends in divorce is 24.3 months.^{viii} Therefore, the author presumes that the majority of the marriages which end in divorce begin during the Marine’s first-term, when he is an E-4 or below.

In regards to the majority of the research cited in this paper, the reader will notice that the author will refer far more to research done on civilians than on enlisted Marines. The reason for this is because there is little research done specifically on marriage and divorce among Marines, E-5 and below. The author, then, tried to find research done on compatible civilian age groups and apply it appropriately.

It is important that the reader understands that the author is not advocating that less time or fewer resources be allotted to Marines, E-5 and below, in distressed marriages or going through divorce. These Marines and their spouses deserve the attention and time of those who can help them. The hypothesis the author will explore is that a significant *reduction* in the rate of divorce among Marines, E-5 and below – not a decrease in *services* to those in distressed marriages or going through a divorce – will result in an increase in personnel and time to train.

It is also important that the reader understand what the author means by the phrase, “ill-informed marital decisions.” In no way is the author implying that first-term Marines are unintelligent; nor is the point that first-term Marines are not capable of making wise decisions when it comes to selecting the right person and the time to marry. The author simply means that research for this thesis and ten years of counseling has lead him to the conclusion that most first-term Marines are deciding to get married without a real understanding of what it takes to succeed in marriage, and *they do not realize they lack this understanding*. In a very real sense, when it comes to knowing what it will take to succeed in marriage, they do not know what they do not know. This is why the author has chosen to use the phrase, “ill-informed marital decisions.”

Problem-framing

The first step in problem-framing is to concede that stable marriages among first-term Marines is not the problem. In fact, marriages that are stable can help, not harm, the first-term Marine and the Marine Corps in a number of ways. First, a stable marriage can be a protective factor. For example, the intervention of a Marine spouse who notices that her husband is drinking excessively after a combat deployment can be the reason he agrees to get help.^{ix} A 2011 study on Soldiers who deployed into a combat zone found that couples who self-reported being happily married and corresponded frequently with each other (especially with “delayed forms of communication” like letters and care packages that are “delayed” by the mail) “predicted lower levels of PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder] symptoms” than self-reporting couples with lower levels of marital satisfaction.^x

Second, a stable marriage can improve the mental health of a first-term Marine. A 2012 study on the connection between mental health and marriage among young civilian adults concluded that “in general, marriage in young adulthood is not detrimental to mental health. Being in any kind of [romantic] relationship is good for psychological distress, being married or engaged curbs drunkenness, and married young adults, especially those who marry at ages 22 to 26, are more satisfied with their lives.”^{xi} Many first-term Marines who are married fall into this age group, since the average age of a Marine Corps Corporal is 23.3 years old^{xii} and the marriage rate is double among Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) as compared to E-3 and below.^{xiii}

Third, empirical data strongly suggests that marital responsibilities motivate first-term Marines to succeed. A 2005 Gazette article, “First-Enlistment Marriages” reveals that first-term married Marines – male or female – perform as well or slightly better than single Marines in PFT scores, proficiency/conduct marks, and rifle scores. Additionally, while married Marines

represent 40.8 percent of first-term enlistments, they account for “only 23.7 percent of all misconduct related discharges.”^{xiv}

The marriage rate among first-term Marines is triple that of their civilian counterparts. According to a 2011 Pew Research Center study, only 9% of civilian 18-24 year-old Americans are married^{xv} while the marriage rate of the comparative age group within Marine enlisted ranks^{xvi} is 30.6 %.^{xvii} While extending marital benefits to first-term Marines is expensive (exceeding \$500 million per year^{xviii}), the fact that first-term Marines get married is not the problem as long as the majority of weddings lead to stable marriages which help, not hurt, Marines and the Marine Corps.

Many first-term marriages, however, do not lead to stable marriages. While the divorce rate in the Marine Corps as a whole is not higher than the civilian population,^{xix} a three-year average comparison of the divorce rate among Marines, E-5 and below, shows this population is divorcing at almost *three times* the rate of the equivalent American population (Appendix A). Within the Marine Corps, the rate of divorce among Marines, E-5 and below, as compared to the entire Marine Corps is also disproportionally high: 69% of all divorces in the Marine Corps are E-5 and below, with the majority of divorces (52%) occurring among NCOs.^{xx}

The Impact of Divorce

Divorce among Marines, E-5 and below, is having a significant impact in at least two areas of unit operational readiness. The first and most compelling area is loss of personnel since divorce makes Marines, E-5 and below, particularly vulnerable to suicide. A retrospective, case-control study of the medical records for active duty military members from 2001 to 2009 found that “partner relationship problems,” increased their risk for suicide.^{xxi} Research conducted by

Marine and Family Programs Division revealed that 43% of all Marines who committed suicide in 2008 to 2010 had “marital or other relationship problems” as a top associated stressor, second only to “legal or disciplinary problems” (Appendix B). Data from the Department of Defense Suicide Event Report (DoDSER) between 2009 and 2011 seems to strengthen this connection between divorce and vulnerability to suicide. At first glance, the connection appears weak, since only 6% of Marines who committed suicide in the Marine Corps were legally divorced.^{xxii} A closer look at demographics, however, reveals that 40% of all Marines who committed suicide had a known history of a failed marital or intimate relationship.^{xxiii} Among these Marines, 82% of their intimate relationships failed within 90 days of their suicide.^{xxiv} Therefore, it is likely that this 6% divorce rate only accounts for Marines who completed all the legal requirements for getting divorced but *not* for the Marines whose marital relationship had failed but had yet to complete all the legal requirements for divorce. In other words, it is likely that this 6% figure does not account for the Marines who were emotionally, but not legally, divorced.

There are some important caveats to interpreting this data. First, difficulty or failure in intimate relationships was not the only reason for suicide; most Marines who committed suicide were dealing with at least three associated stressors at the same time.^{xxv} In some cases, a Marine was dealing with as many as 20 associated stressors when she decided to commit suicide.^{xxvi} But if one proposes that the reason a Marine commits suicide is to escape being overwhelmed by the accumulation of a host of stressors, it is reasonable to conclude that divorce makes one particularly vulnerable to suicide since, according to the Holmes-Rahe Stress Inventory used by the American Institute of Stress, divorce is the second most stressful event a person can encounter.^{xxvii} It is likely, then, that some stressors impact greater than others.

Another important caveat to interpreting this data is to note that the DoDSER and the research conducted by Marine and Family Programs Division on suicide disclosed the demographics, not the specific reasons why servicemen and women committed suicide; however, since 75% of all Marines who committed suicide from 2009 to 2011 did not communicate their intent to commit suicide to anyone,^{xxviii} one must look at the available data for the most likely reasons why they decided to end their lives. It is reasonable to deduce, then, there is a cause-and-affect relationship between failed marital or intimate relationships and increased vulnerability to suicide since a high percentage of Marines share the same demographic data (“failed marital or intimate relationships”) over a three-year period. It is unlikely that this is merely coincidental. Demographic data from this same report also strongly suggests that young enlisted Marines are particularly vulnerable to suicide, since 69% of Marines who committed suicide were 24 years or younger^{xxix} and 66% were E-4 and below.^{xxx} The fusion of this data seems to strengthen the connection between first-term Marines, failed marital relationships, and vulnerability to suicide. Suicide significantly and negatively impacts unit operational readiness because it robs the Marine Corps of its greatest asset: Marines. This loss of personnel is particularly troubling since 50% more Marines committed suicide in CY 2012 as compared to CY2011.^{xxxi}

A second way that divorce among first-term Marines is significantly impacting unit operational readiness is it wastes time that could be used for training. There is no metric in place that measures the loss of work productivity from the fallout of first-term Marines going through a divorce; however, data from a 1996 study connecting marital distress and loss of productivity provides an applicable metric. In this study, men who were married less than ten years and experiencing marital distress were significantly less productive at work than their counterparts; they worked 1.34 workdays less a month than their peers.^{xxxii}

This loss of productivity is likely mirrored among Marines, E-5 and below, going through divorce, since they must miss work to visit the legal office to complete divorce paperwork, clean out and move out of their homes and back into the barracks, appear in civilian court to contest custody, visit the chaplain for emotional support, etc. Assuming that the average length of time a Marine, E-5 and below, is significantly affected by emotional and logistical fallout of divorce is approximately three months (this is a conservative assumption since several studies indicate that for most people, the severity of distress of divorce lasts over a year^{xxxiii}), and 1.34 lost workdays per month is an accurate reflection of work time lost due to divorce, the average Marine, E-5 and below, going through a divorce spends 4.02 days away from work dealing with the aftermath of divorce.^{xxxiv} . From 2001-2009, 7,724 enlisted male Marines divorced,^{xxxv} which calculates to an average of 858 divorces per year (the author could not find equivalent data for female Marines). Assuming the average workday in the Marine Corps is approximately 10 hours a day, and the average Marine going through a divorce spends 40.2 hours away from work, the work hours lost per year due to male enlisted Marines getting divorced, then, amounts to 34,491 lost work hours per year. As cited earlier, 69% of all divorces last year (June 2011 – June 2012) were Marines, E-5 and below, male and female. In 2011, 93% of all active duty enlisted Marines were males.^{xxxvi} This means that approximately 64% of all divorces in the entire Marine Corps are male Marines, E-5 and below. Therefore, approximately 22,074 work hours were lost last year alone due to the fallout from divorce among male Marines, E-5 and below.^{xxxvii} This does not account for additional work hours lost for divorce among female Marines, E-5 and below.

Further work hours are spent by senior enlisted leaders, chaplains working with Marines, and Family Readiness Officers (FROs) investing time and resources to assist Marines, E-5 and below, with their distressed marriages and the trauma of divorce. When asked in an anonymous,

online survey approximately how many hours per week they spend dealing with Marines, E-5 and below, who are in distressed marriages or are going through a divorce, 68 senior enlisted leaders self-reported spending an average of an hour per week (questions three and four, Appendix C), 47 chaplains working with Marines self-reported spending an average of four hours per week (questions four and five, Appendix D), and 82 FROs self-reported spending an average of two hours per week (question three and four, Appendix E). This amounts to approximately seven hours per week senior enlisted leaders, chaplains working with Marines, and FROs spend assisting Marines, E-5 and below, in distressed marriages and with the trauma of divorce while in garrison, per unit. This would be time well spent if the effort to help distressed marriages resulted in the majority of them reconciling and moving towards stable marriages. This is not the case. In this same anonymous, online survey, 77% of senior enlisted leaders, 51% of chaplains working with Marines, and 73% of FROs, reported that “no matter how much assistance they receive, most distressed marriages of Marines (E-5 and below) STILL end in divorce” (Question 5, Appendix C, question 6, Appendix D, and question 5, Appendix E).

A five-year study of couples in Louisiana may explain why so many distressed marriages among Marines, E-5 and below, still fail after receiving command assistance. In this study, counseling for couples in marital distress actually *increased* the rate of divorce.^{xxxviii} The research team proposed that a possible reason for this increase in divorce was due to the fact that these distressed couples already concluded there was no hope for their marriage before the counseling even began. What these couples really wanted, then, was divorce counseling, not marital counseling. This research raises questions as to whether all of the time and effort spent by senior enlisted leaders, FROs, and chaplains working with Marines assisting Marines, E-5 and below, with distressed marriage is time well spent, especially if there is a more effective (and

proactive) means to reduce divorce. One thing is certain: It is time that cannot be redeemed to train Marines.

Aside from Marines missing work and unit leaders expending time and effort assisting Marines in marital distress or going through a divorce, one can only speculate as to the *additional* negative affects on unit operational readiness caused by divorce. It is well documented that divorce causes emotional distress, health problems, and increases the risk of anti-social behavior. As stated earlier, the Holmes-Rahe Stress Inventory, used by the American Institute of Stress, measures divorce as the second most stressful event a person can encounter; only the death of a spouse is more stressful.^{xxxix} The Virginia Longitudinal Study of Divorce and Remarriage found that the largest category (38%) that described the emotional state and behavior of men within the first year of divorce was “defeated.” That is, divorced men in this study were characterized by “low social responsibility, self-esteem, and achievement and elevated scores on depression and anti-social behaviors. They often had difficulties such as alcoholism, drug abuse, minor hassles with the law, and their lifestyles often resulted in health problems.”^{xi} The second largest descriptive category for men a year after divorce (23%) was “swingers.” That is, divorced men who spent more time in single’s bars and engaged in casual sex. Emotional distress, though not as pronounced as the “defeated” group, was evident in this group as well: “Swingers” were more prone to alcohol and drug abuse, many were unhappy under the surface, and the group as a whole was moderately prone to depression and a lower regard for responsible social behavior.^{xli} In regard to alcohol abuse, it is unclear whether alcohol abuse leads to divorce or divorce leads to alcohol abuse. What is clear, however, is that “[d]ivorced people have the highest alcohol consumption levels in our society; married people have the lowest . . .”^{xlii} While the participants of these studies were primarily civilians (the author could not find this type of research on

military personnel), it is logical to deduce that Marines, E-5 and below, are similarly affected by divorce.

The significant negative affects caused by divorce among Marines, E-5 and below, only become clear as one views its cumulative effect on unit operational readiness. Divorced Marines, E-5 and below, are significantly more vulnerable to suicide, significantly less productive at work, likely to suffer from emotionally distress, and more likely to engage in anti-social behavior and alcohol abuse. Their unit leaders, chaplains, and FROs invest time and effort assisting them with their distressed marriages only to have the majority of these marriages fail. It is no wonder, then, that a recent anonymous poll showed 72% of 198 FROs, senior enlisted leaders, and chaplains working with Marines consider divorce among Marines, E-5 and below, to be a “significant,” not a “minor,” problem (question 6, Appendix C; question 7, Appendix D; question 6, Appendix E). In short, divorce among Marines, E-5 and below, is having a significant negative impact on unit operational readiness.

The “Why” Behind Divorce

In order to arrive at a solution that effectively reduces divorce among Marines, E-5 and below, one must first understand *why* marriages among first-term Marines are at a higher risk of divorce. While this “wicked” problem may never be completely understood, existing research does provide some clarity as to why it occurs. Research indicates that first-term Marines are getting married far younger than their civilian counterparts because they desire military marital benefits. A study comparing civilian and enlisted divorce rates during the late 70’s when the military was an all-volunteer force found the “likely” reason junior military members were marrying earlier than their civilian peers was “stable employment and secure socioeconomic

status” since “the military offers a unique set of economic opportunities and benefits.”^{xliii} What was true of servicemen in the 1970’s seems true of servicemen today. Research from a 2007 RAND study suggests that junior military members are incentivized to marry younger than their civilian counterparts because of the lure of military benefits.^{xliv} In a 2010 study, active duty members who qualified for military marital benefits married at a higher rate than National Guard members of the same age group (23-25 years old) who were mobilized for active duty but had far less exposure to these same military marital benefits. The difference between these two groups – identical in age and both serving on active duty – was the availability of marital benefits offered by the military.^{xlv}

Unfortunately, many first-term Marines make an ill-informed decision to marry because they mistake vocational ability for maturity. In other words, if they believe they can afford to marry, first-term Marines often feel they are ready to get married, regardless of their actual maturity. Many first-term Marines (like most young adults who consider themselves “in love”) idealistically believe marriage will be a wonderful (and indefinite) continuation of their current intense emotional experience. But, unlike most of their civilian counterparts, first-term Marines can usually afford to get married because of military marital benefits. The combination of young love and the allure of military marital benefits appear to be the main reasons first-term Marines are marrying at three times the rate of their civilian peers.

Research strongly suggests that immaturity due to age increases one’s risk for divorce. One of the top risk factors in getting divorced within the first 10 years of marriage is getting married before the age of 25.^{xlvi} Attributing immaturity to youth is not straightforward because there is no objective way to measure maturity (or immaturity) due to the fact that there is no consensus within academia as to how to define “maturity.” There is, however, academic

consensus that maturity, whatever it is, tends to advance with age.^{xlvi} Therefore, it is logical to conclude, generally speaking, that the older a person is, the more mature she is, and the younger a person is, the less mature she is. Therefore, it is likely that immaturity due to age explains why young couples under the age of 25 are significantly more at risk for divorce.

How does immaturity due to age specifically increase a young couple's risk for divorce?

According to Dr. Clark-Stewart and Dr. Brentano in their book, "Divorce and Consequences,"

People who marry young are also likely to do so for all the wrong reasons . . . they view marriage naively and romantically with the focus on physical expressions of togetherness. They are less likely than more mature couples to fully understand the meaning of marriage with its implications for long-term social, emotional, and material commitment. They are likely to be psychologically immature and not well equipped to prevent and solve problems.^{xlvi}

Additionally, "[p]eople who marry young are still developing and likely to change in unanticipated directions."^{xlvi} Young married couples are confronted with the sobering reality that marriage is harder than they anticipated, and, in addition, they must adjust to the many changes within their spouse as he or she develops. For many young military couples, the difficulties and adjustments that a marriage demands is more than they are willing to expend. Consequently, they divorce.

The connection between the increased risk of divorce and immaturity due to age is not unique to the Marine Corps; however, first-term Marines and their spouses face greater external stressors – stressors coming from outside their marriage, such as loneliness due to deployments, the risk of military member being physically and/or psychologically injured or killed in combat, etc.¹ – external stressors virtually unknown to their civilian counterparts. These external stressors unique to military life, coupled with immaturity, further increase their risk of divorce.^{li}

At first glance, data on military divorce seems to contradict this assertion, since divorce in the military as a whole has not increased with the increase in operational tempo and

deployments post September 11, 2001,^{lii} and FY2011 data shows there is no appreciable difference in divorce rates among all Marines who deployed (3.6%) versus all Marines who did not deploy (3.7%).^{liii} But data from a 2011 study reveals that *young* Marines in *new* marriages were more negatively affected by the stressors of deployment than older Marines who were married longer. “. . . [W]here the overall length of marriage was shorter and the average age of the sample was younger, longer separation from the spouse and the act of deploying caused significant marital conflict.”^{liv} In other words, the longer the first deployment, the more likely it was for younger married Marines to divorce than older married Marines. Additionally, young married Marines who deployed were significantly more likely to divorce than young married Marines who had *not* deployed.^{lv} Both of these data points suggest that immaturity due to age, coupled with the external stressors unique to military life, was the reason these young couples were more at-risk for divorce.

The research of social psychologist and UCLA Associate Professor Dr. Benjamin Karney may explain the connection between immaturity, external stressors, and the increased risk of divorce. The key to marital success, according to Dr. Karney, is the choice to *selectively* focus on a spouse’s positive attributes (and not her negative attributes) in order to construct and maintain an overall positive impression of her. Marital happiness, then, is maintained as long as the spouse *chooses* to focus on his spouse’s positive attributes and not on her negative attributes; however, external stressors can inhibit a spouse’s capacity to retain this ability to selectively focus on his spouse’s positive attributes. This loss of capacity can lead to focusing on his spouse’s negative attributes and the formation of an overall negative impression of his spouse, resulting in a decrease in marital satisfaction and higher risk of divorce.^{lvi}

While some people are naturally more resilient than others, in general, SNCOs, Officers and their spouses are more resilient to external stressors – especially to those unique to military life – because they have had more exposure to tough, realistic training, have successfully completed one or more deployments, and are generally more mature due to being older and having more life experience.^{lvii} This resiliency to external stressors allows them to retain their capacity to selectively focus on the positive attributes of their mate. This, in turn, leads to greater marital satisfaction and a decreased risk of divorce. It is also logical to presume that the opposite is true of Marines, E-5 and below, who have not had the same level of exposure to tough, realistic training, who have deployed less or not at all, and are less mature due to being younger and having less life experience. This makes them less resilient to external stressors unique to military life, resulting in a diminished capacity to selectively focus on the positive attributes of their spouse. This, in turn, leads to a decreased level of marital satisfaction and an increased risk of divorce. This explains why immaturity, coupled with external stressors unique to the military, makes Marines, E-5 and below, particularly at-risk for divorce.

There is a third factor that further increases the risk of divorce among many first-term Marines: They enter into marriage with an inadequate understanding of the skill set needed to succeed in marriage.^{lviii} In a very real sense, they do not know what they do not know. With national divorce rates slightly under 50% and more and more Americans choosing to cohabitate instead of marry,^{lix} many young Marines have never observed a stable marriage modeled at home or elsewhere. Is it mere coincidence that 24.3 months^{lx} is the average length of a marriage that ends in divorce for Marines, E-5 and below, and six to 24 months is the average period of time researchers calculate that the intense emotions^{lxi} and biochemical euphoria^{lxii} associated with “new love” last before declining? It is likely that many Marines, E-5 and below, simply do not

know that the waning of “new love” is simply a normal part of marriage before they transition to a stage of marriage that requires more effort, sacrifice, and compromise. If unaware of this reality, young Marines might conclude, then, that the waning of romantic feelings signals the end of the relationship, not a normal transition to a more mature love.

In summary, why are Marines, E-5 and below, getting divorced at far higher rate than their civilian counterparts and the rest of the Marine Corps? Simply put, many are making ill-informed marital choices. They mistake vocational ability for maturity as a good indicator that they are ready to marry. Once married, the combination of their immaturity due to age, external stressors unique to military life, and a diminished understanding of the effort and sacrifice it takes to succeed in marriage make them particularly vulnerable to divorce.

A Proposed Solution to Reduce Divorce

If first-term Marines are making ill-informed marital choices that make them particularly vulnerable to divorce, and those divorces are having a significant negative impact on unit operational readiness, what is to be done? What cannot be done is to restrict marriage or marital benefits in any way to first-term Marines. The American people want their servicemen and women to get the support they deserve, which includes supporting their right to marry whom they chose and the means to support a family once they marry. Myriad civilian volunteer organizations and programs geared towards assisting married service members and their families are tangible indicators of this strong desire. Likewise, the Commander-in-Chief, President Obama, his administration, and the First Lady share this sentiment, viewing strong military families and “the highest state of readiness” as compatible goals.^{lxiii} Any move, then, by the Marine Corps to take away or restrict marriage or marital benefits to first-term Marines would

most likely be met with the political fury equaled to the response to General Mundy's attempt in 1993. What can and should be done, however, is a Marine Corps-wide implementation of mandatory pre-marital training for first-term Marines which would empower them to make better marital decisions.

There are **four parts** to this proposed pre-marital training. The **first** part is a short video followed by a question and answer period led by the unit chaplain. The goal of this video would be to confront the first-term Marine's idealistic view of marriage in the military with a *realistic* view of marriage, including the concept of sacrifice and maturity to succeed past the "honeymoon" period. First-term Marines need to learn that "[v]irtually every study done on this topic [marital quality] has found that the overall quality of marriages declined in the challenging first few years . . . the adjustment to married life is challenging, and most couples struggled with all aspects of it."^{lxiv} This video would also confront first-term Marines with the ugly reality of divorce. The "take-home" message should be, "While you may be able to afford to get married, marriage is *harder* than you think it will be, and divorce is *worse* than you think it will be." This video should include voluntary testimonials of enlisted Marines happily married for over four years and divorced junior enlisted Marines.

Following the video, the unit chaplain would lead a guided discussion on marriage from a set of pre-written questions which challenge idealistic assumptions many young Marines make about marriage. At the end of this training, MCCS courses like "How Not to Marry a Jerk/Jerkette" (which teaches "singles and singles-again how to pace a growing relationship in such a way as to avoid becoming over-attached and subsequently overlooking key problem areas in the developing relationship"^{lxv}) should be promoted for singles, and marriage resources like Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (P.R.E.P.) and counseling resources should

be promoted for those who are already married. This training would only need to be done once a year and take no longer than 30 minutes. The Chaplain Corps could offer training to chaplains on how to lead this period of instruction during a Professional Development Training Workshop conducted the day prior to the Professional Development Training Course that chaplains participate in annually. The Chaplain Corps could also add this training to the Chaplain and Religious Program Specialist Expeditionary Skills Training to ensure continuity of training.

The **second** part of this pre-marital training should be to require first-term Marines to complete a standardized *pre*-marital checklist before they marry and a standardized *post*-marital checklist within a month of getting married (see Appendix F for an example of both of these checklists). The purposes of these checklists would be to compel first-term Marines desiring to marry to seriously consider whether they are ready to get married, and to inform first-term Marines desiring to marry of all local programs geared to help them succeed in marriage. Chaplains would create these checklists through Operation Planning Teams (OPTs) formed in the Camp Pendleton/Miramar area, the Camp Lejeune/New River area, and the Camp Foster/Futenma area, led by a senior chaplain. Representatives of Marine Corps Family Team Building, Marine Corps Community Services, Family Advocacy, and senior Marine Corps leadership should also be invited to participate in the formation of these checklists.

These pre-marital and post-marital checklists would leverage all base and local community programs to include local religious institutions both on and off-base, since multiple studies confirm that couples who regularly attend the same religious institution are significantly at lower risk of divorce than those who do not attend or those who attend occasionally.^{lxvi} One five-year study found that religiosity buffered couples from getting divorced for three reasons: 1) they viewed God as “the benefactor and protector of their marriage;” 2) it was their “duty to God

to develop strong relationship management and communication skills;” and, 3) they “actively rely on their view of marriage as sacred to manage severe marital crises, often with great success.”^{lxvii} These checklists would *not in any way* make it mandatory to attend a religious institution. They would simply present first-term Marines with information on local religious institutions and programs.

These pre-marital and post-marital checklists would do more than simply give a first-term Marine a list of programs to support her once married; it should compel her to seriously consider if she is actually even ready to get married. The *pre-marital* checklist accomplishes this by making it mandatory for the Marine desiring to marry to do the following: 1) construct a budget demonstrating that she can afford to get married and have it reviewed by the unit’s certified financial specialist; 2) explain her logistical plan for marriage and post-marriage to unit leadership; and, 3) meet with the unit chaplain to explore whether she has a realistic understanding of what it takes to succeed in marriage and if she is ready for marriage. Chaplains should be trained and equipped to administer a pre-marital questionnaire that objectively assesses the couple’s knowledge of each other, the couple’s compatibility, and whether or not the couple has a realistic view of marriage.

This pre-marital questionnaire is essential because, in the author’s experience, it is very effective in getting engaged couples to set aside their idealistic views of marriage and take a realistic look at areas of concern in their relationship.^{lxviii} The author has found that such a questionnaire does not allow couples to easily dismiss these areas of concern because it is their answers to the questionnaire – not an outside opinion – that raises the areas of concern. This pre-marital questionnaire should be accessible online to allow the fiancé to take it if she is not geographically co-located with the junior Marine. The chaplain can discuss the results with the

Marine in person and, if need be, by phone with the fiancé. The pre-marital checklist will only require the Marine to see the chaplain for one interview; however, many chaplains offer additional pre-marital training if the Marine is willing. Fiancé participation throughout this process should be encouraged but cannot be mandatory. Programs that are only beneficial if the fiancé is present (i.e., P.R.E.P., “Lifestyle, Insights, Networking, Knowledge and Skills,” etc.) should be a part of the post-marital checklist since many fiancés co-locate only after they marry their Marine.

Will these pre-marital and post-marital checklists effectively reduce the rate of divorce for first-term Marines? Data from “mandatory” civilian pre-marital programs strongly suggest they would. One such program is the Community Marriage Policy (CMP) founded by Michael McManus and his wife, Harriet. CMP brings together the majority of clergy members from various faith groups within a community in agreement not to marry a couple until they complete rigorous marriage preparation.^{lxi} This essentially makes pre-marital training mandatory in communities where CMP is implemented, since the majority of Americans marry in a place of worship by clergy.^{lxx} A study of 114 communities of various sizes and locations throughout the United States which established a CMP revealed a “modest but statistically significant decline in divorce rates.”^{lxxi} A 2006 study of the effect of pre-marital training on divorce found that “participation in pre-marital education [93% done in a religious setting]^{lxxii} is associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction, lower levels of destructive conflicts, and higher levels of interpersonal commitment to spouses. Similarly, pre-marital education was associated with a 31% decrease in the odds of divorce, even after controlling for many characteristics correlated with both divorce and pre-marital education.”^{lxxiii} A five-year study of couples in Louisiana found that multiple sessions of pre-marital counseling reduced divorce by *half*^{lxxiv} since “pre-

marital counseling seemed to reduce divorce by countering the otherwise negative effects of low education, lack of support from family and friends, and financial and personal disadvantages.”^{lxxv}

Many first-term Marines and their spouses face many of these disadvantages: Financial hardships due to spouses not able to find work in this economy, lack of support of family and friends due to geographic separation when the spouse co-locates to live with their Marine, etc. So when chaplains, Marine Corps leaders, FROs, Marine Corps Community Services, Marine Corps Family Team Building, and Family Advocacy Program unite to create a “CMP-like” agreement for mandatory pre-marital training for first-term Marines desiring to marry, it is likely that results will mirror the success of other CMP communities: A significant increase in marital satisfaction and a significant decrease in divorce among Marines, E-5 and below.

While many Marine leaders may see these mandatory checklists as beneficial to their first-term Marines, they might be reluctant to implement them on the grounds that mandatory pre-marital training may not be legal. The legal opinion of the First Marine Division Staff Judge Advocate, Colonel D. K. Margolin, is that it is “permissible” to mandate pre-marital training because “there is a valid military purpose.” That is, “to protect the health and welfare of first-term Marines desiring to marry without interfering with their right to marry whom they want to marry; nor would these checklists limit their access to military marital benefits.”^{lxxvi}

Marine Corps Colonel Stephen Newman of the Navy Department's Government Appellate Division mostly agrees. While he points out that there is no military case law which directly addresses this legal issue, he cites to a 1981 Army Court of Military Review case, *US v. Hoard*, 12 M.J. 563.^{lxxvii} In this case, the Army Court considered the prohibition of unofficial personal association between military trainers and trainees for the duration of training to be lawful and not in violation of the right to free association, as the prohibition was temporary and

ended at the completion of training. Similarly, mandatory pre-marital training would not permanently prevent a first-term Marine from marrying or gaining access to marital benefits; it would simply mandate pre-marital training be completed before a first-term Marine marries.^{lxxviii} This legal opinion, however, according to Colonel Margolin and Colonel Newman, could be subject to challenge since *US v. Hoard* does not specifically address whether or not mandating pre-marital training could violate a first-term Marine's Constitutional right to freedom of association.

Even if mandatory pre-marital training is legally permissible, some Marine Corps leaders may still prefer that this training be voluntary rather than mandatory. After all, leaders may not want to be placed in the position of having to NJP a first-term Marine for failing to complete a pre-marital checklist before he got married. Why not avoid this unsavory scenario altogether by making pre-marital training voluntary rather than mandatory?

There are several points to consider that would favor of mandatory, rather than highly encouraged, pre-marital preparation. First of all, it is unlikely that mandatory pre-marital training, when woven properly into the fabric of the unit's standard operating procedures (SOP), would result in a high volume of disciplinary action due to non-compliance. First-term Marines would likely comply mandatory pre-marital training the same way they comply with other mandatory training.

Take, for instance, compliance to Camp Pendleton Base Order 5000.2k that requires Marines and Sailors to take the motorcycle safety course before they can ride their motorcycle on base. When asked how compliant Marines are to this mandatory training, First Marine Division Safety Officer, Captain Daniel Mulcahy responded,

A very high percentage of motorcycle riders are in compliance with basic rider course and advanced rider course which is mandated by Marine Corps order. These statistics are

tracked closely at the battalion level and submitted quarterly to Headquarters Marine Corps via the Warrior Preservation Status Report. Therefore, units and commanders are actively ensuring Marines receive this required training. To the best of my knowledge, the incident involving disciplinary action of Marines for non-compliance is very low.^{lxxix}

It is likely, then, once mandatory pre-marital training became a SOP, the compliance rate to mandatory pre-marital training would mirror the compliance rate to mandatory motorcycle training since the two programs are similar: Both require that Marines complete training above and beyond the civilian standard (civilians do not have to complete a motorcycle safety course before they ride their motorcycles, and civilians do not have complete pre-marital counseling before they marry); and, mandatory motorcycle safety training does not interfere with the Marines' right to purchase the motorcycle of their choosing in the same way that mandatory pre-marital training does not interfere with the Marines' right to marry whomever they want to marry. A high level of compliance should translate to a very low level of disciplinary action against those who refuse to comply.

Another point to consider in favor of mandatory, rather than voluntary pre-marital training is to realize how enticing marriage is to first-term Marines. Those who have "fallen in love" understand how intense the desires aroused by love can be, especially the desire to be with the object of their affection. First-term Marines experience these same intense desires when they "fall in love." It has been the author's experience that many first-term Marines are geographically separated from their significant other. So getting married is an attractive means of fulfilling their intense desire to be close to the one they love.

It is important to understand, however, that this intense desire is not the only reason compelling first-term Marines to marry. As cited earlier in this paper, the allure of financial gain through military marital benefits is an additional reason. The March 11, 2013 Marine Corps Times Article, "Sham Marriages" illustrates how powerful this allure is: Some Marines risk their

careers in order to make money through contract marriages (Marines marrying strangers whom do not love for the sole purpose of collecting BAH).^{lxxx} Thus, when the two are combined – the intense desire to be with the one they love and the powerful allure of financial gain – getting married becomes almost irresistible to first-term Marines.

Not only do many first-term Marines find marriage almost irresistible, many are eager to enter into marriage because they are very confident they will succeed in marriage. After all, they wonder, how could such intense feelings of love ever fade? This is a typical assumption of young love. In his book, “The Four Loves,” philosopher and theologian C.S. Lewis acutely observed that “Eros,” the Greek word for romantic-sexual love that characterizes falling in love, consumes the lover and orientates her on prioritizing the needs of the one she loves over her own needs.^{lxxxi} Her lover, equally consumed by her, prioritizes her needs over his. This altruism, combined with the biochemical euphoria that “falling in love” brings,^{lxxxii} ushers in what is commonly called the “honeymoon period.”

This likely explains why, when offered by the author, the majority of first-term Marines have turned down voluntary pre-marital training. Those in the grips of Eros are convinced that their relationship is already wonderful. They are equally assured that marriage will simply be a continuation of their present bliss with the added bonus of financial gain. What, then, in the need for pre-marital training?

Many first-term Marines do not realize that Eros cannot deliver on what it promises. Lewis rightly asserts that Eros “is notoriously the most mortal of our loves.”^{lxxxiii} The altruism generated by Eros that makes relationship so effortless predictably slips away as Eros lapses, allowing the “old self” to selfishly reassert itself.^{lxxxiv} Consequently, lovers begin to focus less on each other’s needs and more on their own needs. Suddenly a relationship that was so effortless

begins to require great effort. And instead of realizing that “honeymoon period” is a wonderful but transient phase of love, many first-term Marines conclude that their relationship is failing. They do not realize that they “must do the work of Eros when Eros is not present.”^{lxxxv}

These two realities – the irresistibility of marriage and the overconfidence of success in marriage – is why commanders should favor mandatory, vice voluntary, pre-marital training. Pre-marital checklists stand the best chance of debunking the powerful and pervasive misconception among first-term Marines that marriage will be effortless and marital benefits will be lucrative. It also stands the best chance of persuading those who see no need for pre-marital training to face the reality that they do, in fact, need it because marriage will not always be as effortless and sublime as Eros promises it will be. If first-term Marines hear a uniform message on the reality of marriage and military marital benefits from their FRO, chaplain, certified financial specialist, and Commanding Officer, it is likely this message will penetrate their “honeymoon bubble.” This will likely, in turn, cause first-term Marines to make better-informed marital decisions. It will also likely result in more first-term Marines choosing not to get married because they will have been persuaded by this training that they are not ready to get married.

The **third** part of this pre-marital training program would be to equip the first-term Marine’s fiancé with a realistic picture of marriage in the Marine Corps and the character traits needed to be a successful military spouse.^{lxxxvi} This could be done with the production of a short video available online and accessible to fiancés who are geographically separated from their Marine. Married enlisted spouses who have been through a deployment and who have been happily married for more than four years should play a leading role in this. Such spouses can participate in the formulation of the list of character traits of a successful Marine spouse and provide input to content of this video.

The **fourth** part of this pre-marital training should be an intentional information campaign from Marine Corps senior enlisted leadership that connects the core value of “commitment” with marital vows. This does not mean that the senior enlisted leaders need to denounce divorce; they should, however, exhort first-term Marines to be very intentional about making and keeping marital life-long vows, since a Marine’s bond is his word. This information campaign need not be a “stand-alone” message, and it need not be lengthy. It could be as simple as the insertion of the following statement into Sergeant Marine of the Marine Corps’ annual birthday ball address: “Marines honor their commitments to their country, their Corps, *their spouses and loved ones*, and to each other, no matter what the personal cost. Why? Because that’s what Marines do.” Married leaders at every level could complement this information campaign by honoring marital commitment with their words and actions. This information campaign would confront the powerful undercurrent within the Marine Corps – especially in the enlisted community – that marriage is disposable and fidelity, especially on deployment, is optional, since “what happens on deployment stays on deployment.”

Having described a four-part solution to reducing divorce, here are five additional reasons which favor its implementation. First, this solution is politically viable. The American public would most likely favor a mandatory program that prepares first-term Marines for marriage without taking away their right to marry (or their marital benefits), since many would likely view it as a means to empower first-term Marines to make better marital choices. Additionally, it is unlikely that those in positions of power would reject it since it aligns with strategic goals of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, the Navy Chief of Chaplains, and the President of the United States. For example, this training aligns with the Navy Chief of Chaplain’s priority to “strengthen the force”^{lxxxvii} by ensuring that chaplains are leading the effort

to assist first-term Marines and their fiancés in making better marital choices that will result in more stable marriages and, consequently, a stronger Marine Corps. One could argue that this solution is an implied task in the Commandant's pledge to "keep faith with Marine Corps families"^{lxxxviii} by leveraging all available assets to assist first-term Marines in making better marital choices. Most importantly, this training furthers President Obama's goal for programs which will "[e]nhance the well-being and psychological health of the military family"^{lxxxix} by mitigating the risk of distressed marriages and divorce by empowering first-term Marines to make better marital choices.

A second reason this training should be implemented is because those who spend the most time assisting first-term Marines with distressed marriages or divorce – senior enlisted leader, chaplains working with Marines, and FROs – want this proposed mandatory pre-marital training. When this same group was asked in an anonymous, online survey, "If the Marine Corps were to implement mandatory pre-marital training for Marines (E-5 and below), which of the following would you like to see included in this training?", 56% voted in favor of "a 15-minute video followed by a chaplain-led Q&A session that would give Marines (E-5 and below) a realistic picture of marriage in the Marine Corps;" 51 % voted in favor of "a 10-minute video that would be accessible online which would give the fiancés of Marines (E-5 and below) a realistic picture of marriage in the Marine Corps;" and, 85 % voted for "a mandatory pre-marital checklist for all Marines (E-5 and below) who want to get married which would assist them in making a well-informed decision regarding marriage before they marry." (These percentages are derived from the combined totals of question seven, Appendix C; question eight, Appendix D; and, question seven, Appendix E).

A third reason this training should be implemented is because much of this proposed solution (or similar training) has been “field-tested” with positive results. For example, Chaplain Trembley interviewed and provided pre-marital training for 325 couples during his 30-month tour with Third Battalion, Third Marines. His efforts resulted in 25 of these couples deciding *not* to marry.^{xc} Another example is the results from a class which the author has taught over the past seven years entitled, “The Secret to a Happy Marriage.” This class intentionally challenges the idealistic notions of marriage held by many first-term Marines (similar in intent to the proposed video for first-term Marines). The author taught this class approximately 16 times to thousands of first-term Marines in three different battalions. Anonymous surveys revealed that the information in this class was beneficial: 49% agreed that “this class was excellent – I learned a lot,” while 41% answered, “This class was pretty good – I learned a little.” (question four, Appendix G) What first-term Marines found particularly helpful was the “love chart” (Appendix H) that describes how love within marriage matures: 52% of those surveyed said the information from the “love chart” was “very good” and 40% found it “good” (question two, Appendix G). This data strengthens the author’s earlier assertion that first-term Marines have an incomplete understanding of the way that love matures in marriage.

The majority of this proposed solution was field-tested during the author’s 15-month tour with Third Assault Amphibian Battalion (3D AABn) in 2011-2012. The author collaborated with battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Howard “Chip” Hall and Sergeant Major Alberto Ruiz to create battalion-wide pre-marital training. The resulting Letter of Instruction can be read in full in Appendix I. The first part of this pre-marital training included all Marines, E-5 and below, attend a pre-marital class at a company level (“The Secret to a Happy Marriage”). The second part of this training applied only to first-term Marines who wanted to get married: Each was

given a pre-marital checklist (Appendix F) to complete before they married and a post-marital checklist (Appendix F) to complete three weeks after they married. This program was implemented in June 2011.

When asked by the author about his perspective on the effectiveness of this pre-marital program 18 months after its implementation, LtCol Hall responded,

It is difficult to prove a negative, but the pre-marital counseling has out-paced counseling provided for difficulties that result from failing marriages. The 199 pre-marital counseling sessions take roughly 30 minutes each and are somewhat scripted. On the other hand, the 148 counseling sessions provided in calendar year 2012 that focused on marriage difficulties consume an average of 60 minutes and are ‘unscripted’ in that a greater amount of dialogue and probing needs to take place. Additionally, failing marriages consume a greater amount of time from the entire chain of command, FRO, and possibly legal services, family advocacy, etc. While pre-marital counseling has not become burdensome to the staff or disruptive to the TEEP [Training Exercise Employment Plan], the net effects of failing marriages have become burdensome to the staff and the TEEP. As a commander, I would prefer to invest the time and resources into the pre-marital counseling sessions as a positive and preventative measure that ideally sets the foundation for a strong and enduring marriage for our personnel while on active duty and for many years after they depart the service. Reactive measures, counseling, and legal services have little positive impact and merely address a situation that is often a foregone conclusion that should have or could have been prevented in the first place.^{xc1}

The fourth reason this training should be implemented is because this proposed solution yields a greater “bang for the buck” than the Marine Corps’ current course of relative inaction. The combined cost of the two videos which would mirror the quality of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response videos would be approximately \$80,000.^{xcii} There are no foreseeable costs involved in the creation and implementation of the pre- and post-marital checklists other than ink and copy paper; nor is there any foreseeable cost in the proposed information campaign. There may be an additional cost involved in the proposed pre-marital questionnaire to be administered by the unit chaplain depending on the one chosen; however, many available pre-marital questionnaires are free.

Granted, the implementation of this proposed training will not reduce the cost of divorce to zero; no program will eradicate divorce. But this is a zero-sum game; that is, the more happily-single and happily-married first-term Marines there are, the fewer divorced Marines, E-5 and below. If two proposed videos are used for a 3-year period, their net cost would be approximately \$26,600 each year. Since the yearly rate for basic allowance for housing (BAH) is over \$22,000 per year for Corporals and below,^{xciii} it would only take *two* first-term Marines a year to be persuaded not to get married because of this training for these videos to pay for themselves. If the results of this training are similar to the results of Chaplain Trembley's pre-marital interviews cited earlier (25 couples out of 325 decided not to get married after being interviewed), this proposed solution has the potential of saving in the Marine Corps saving approximately 21 million dollars a year.^{xciv} Additional savings are likely as Marines who are tempted to enter into contract marriages are discouraged from doing so because the scrutiny that comes with mandatory pre-marital interviews. Additionally, FROs, unit chaplains, and senior enlisted leaders would save a substantial amount of time if their investment of 30-60 minutes in a pre-marital interview resulted in a significant decrease in divorce among Marines, E-5 and below. Survey results in suggest that their current investment of time assisting Marines, E-5 and below, in distressed marriages or going through a divorce is significant and often unsuccessful (question 5, Appendix C; question 6, Appendix D; and question 5, Appendix E). Implementing this proposed solution into the TEEP, then, would likely save time, not add to an already busy training schedule. Most importantly, this proposed solution should improve the quality of life of first-terms Marines by empowering them to make better marital choices that should, in turn, lead to a decrease in marital distress and divorce.

The fifth reason this training should be implemented is because it would be fairly straightforward to measure its effectiveness. Studies confirm that “predicting divorce is a complex enterprise”^{xcv} since there are no clear cause-and-effect relationships between risk factors for divorce and whether or not a couple will divorce.^{xcvi} Additionally, divorce is and will be a “wicked” problem because, like war, it involves human will that is predictably unpredictable. So the reason(s) why Marines, E-5 and below divorce may never be completely understood, and this proposed solution will certainly not completely eradicate divorce among these Marines; however, since the average length of a marriage that ends in divorces for Marines, E-5 and below is 24.3 months,^{xcvii} this proposed solution should significantly decrease divorce among Marines, E-5 and below, 24 months after Corps-wide implementation. Marriage rates among first-term Marines should also decrease within these first two years of implementation, as first-term Marines are persuaded by the proposed pre-marital training that they are not ready to get married. Additionally, application of this proposed solution will provide further clarity to this problem of divorce, since, as is the case with “wicked” problems, patterns emerge only after a solution is applied.^{xcviii} Experts from Marine and Family Programs Division could analyze the effectiveness of this training and capture emerging patterns.

Recommendations for Further Research

Much research still needs to be done to understand why first-term Marines marry and why Marines, E-5 and below, divorce at such a high rate. Questions abound. For example, why are female Marines getting divorced at almost three times the rate of male Marines?^{xcix} Another question: Is there a connection between the stress first-term Marines experience when they start families quickly after getting married and their increased risk of divorce? Also, while there

seems to be a clear connection between military marital benefits and the increase of marriage among first-term Marines, are there other factors incentivizing them to get married (i.e. barrack conditions, loneliness, not wanting to live where they work, marriage perceived as a rite of passage to adulthood, etc.)? If Marines are, in fact, incentivized to marry at a far higher rate than their civilian counterparts because of the allure of marital benefits, would it be cost effective for the Marine Corps to offer financial incentives to Marines who voluntarily agree *not* to marry during their first-enlistment? One financial incentive already proposed in the Marine Corps Gazette would give a \$10,000 “chaste bonus” at the end of a Marine’s first enlistment if he does not get married and does not have children out of wedlock.^c Another Gazette article proposes that the Marine Corps incentivize first-term Marines to remain single by paying them increasing annual bonuses on their anniversary for every year they choose not to marry.^{ci}

Another area which warrants further research is whether or not ill-informed marital decisions among first-term Marines is having a significant negative impact on unit operational readiness in areas *other* than the costly aftermath of divorce. For example, is there a connection between the immaturity of a first-term Marine due to age, marriage, and domestic violence? The DOD Family Advocacy Program Data Report suggests that there is: “Of the active duty alleged abusers in incidents that met FAP [Family Advocacy Program] criteria, 63 percent are in E4-6 grades. The E4-5 pay grades account for over half, 54 percent, of all alleged abusers.”^{cii} If this connection exists, what is the negative impact of domestic violence among Marines, E-5 and below, on unit operational readiness in terms of lost work hours (first-term Marines having to attend classes on domestic violence prevention, Non-Judicial Punishment proceedings, etc.)? Would equipping first-term Marines to make better marital decisions result in a lower rate of domestic violence among Marines, E-5 and below? Likewise, would equipping first-term

Marines to make better marital decisions result in less distressed marriages, decreasing the rate of alcohol abuse among Marines, E-5 and below? Also, would better marital decisions result in more effective NCO leadership, since, as discussed earlier, Marines in stable marriages perform at the same level or better than their single peers? With 52% of all divorces in the Marine Corps occurring among NCOs, this improvement in effective leadership is a real possibility.

Conclusion

There is no consensus on how Americans view divorce. Some liken it, as does pollster George Gallup Jr., as a “scourge” on today’s society;^{ciii} others view it as a positive opportunity to produce “the formation of new, more constructive relationships, and greater individualization and personal growth.”^{civ} There is also a wide spectrum on attitudes towards the impact of divorce. One longitudinal study reveals that most people (including children) recover reasonably well after two to three years.^{cv} Another longitudinal study of children of divorce concludes that negative affects of divorce are cumulative, climaxing in adulthood with a decreased ability to form stable marital relationships and an increased sense that their marriage will inevitably fail as did their parents.^{cvi} Dr. Hetherington, who has studied divorce for many years, captures the growing consensus: “There is no doubt, on the average, divorce exposes adults to risks that are a threat to their social, physical, and economic well-being. Our work and the work of other investigators indicate that overall, men and women in happy marriages are better adjusted than those who are in unhappy marriages or divorced.”^{cvi} Extensive research compiled and conducted by Dr. Waite and Dr. Gallagher comes to a similar conclusion: In general, married men and women are healthier and live longer lives,^{cvi} are emotionally healthier,^{cix} enjoy more frequent and satisfying sex,^{cx} and are more financially secure than single and divorced men and women.^{cx} In a similar fashion, the majority of Marine Corps leaders, regardless of their personal

view on first-term Marines getting married and divorced, can agree that a happily-married first-term Marine and a happy single first-term Marine is better for the Corps than a first-term Marine who is distressed by a failing (or failed) marriage. Marine leaders can also agree that divorce among Marines, E-5 and below, is having a significant negative impact on unit operational readiness. This consensus should motivate Marine leaders to empower first-term Marines with the training they need to make better marital choices which will, in turn, lead to a significant decrease in divorce and a significant increase in unit operational readiness.

APPENDIX A

USMC E-1 TO E-5 DIVORCE RATE COMPARED TO U.S. DIVORCE RATE (PER 1,000 TOTAL POPULATION)

USMC DIVORCE RATES, E-1 TO E-5 (18-30 YEAR OLDS)

YEAR	NUMBER OF DIVORCES PER YEAR	TOTAL POPULATION OF E-1 TO E-5 (INCLUDING DEPENDENTS 0-30 YEARS OLD)	RATE OF DIVORCE PER 1,000 TOTAL POPULATION
2010	3,220	287,671	11.2
2011	2,969	289,103	10.3
2012	2,216	286,300	7.7
3-YEAR AVERAGE	2,802	287,691	9.7

Data collected from Gunnery Sergeant Kenneth Emery II (Data Section, Manpower and Reserve Affairs) on January 10, 2013. Since the average age for Sergeant in the Marine Corps is 26.5 years old,^{cxii} the author estimated the age group of Marines E-1 to E-5 to be 18-30 years old. **Data for Marine Corps divorce rates prior to 2010 is not accessible.**

UNITED STATES DIVORCE RATES (18 TO 30 YEARS OLD)

YEAR	NUMBER OF DIVORCES PER YEAR (18-30 YEARS OLD)	TOTAL POPULATION OF UNITED STATES (0-30 YEARS OLD)	RATE OF DIVORCE PER 1,000 TOTAL POPULATION
3-YEAR AVERAGE (2009-2011)	424,910	126,114,088	3.4

Data from the American Community Survey gathered by Rose Kreider, Ph.D, Fertility and Family Statistics Branch, Social, Economic and Housing Statistics Division, U.S. Census Bureau via telephone on January 23, 2013. **This is the most recent census data available.**

APPENDIX B



USMC Associated Stressors

Top Associated Stressors*	2008 - 2010 Suicides
Legal or Disciplinary Problem	44%
Marital or Other Relationship Problem	43%
Behavioral Health Diagnoses	37%
Substance Abuse	13%
Financial Problem	11%

* Reflects a history of the stressor/risk factor within 1 year of the suicide

"Keeping Faith"

Provided by Mr. Todd Shuttleworth, Section Head, Suicide Prevention and Response, Marine and Family Programs via email on January 1, 2013.

Appendix C - Survey to Senior Enlisted leaders (primarily First Sergeants) who attended a senior enlisted course in Quantico

1. What type of unit are you currently serving?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Division	39.1%	27
Marine Logistics Group	23.2%	16
Marine Air Wing	1.4%	1
Independent Duty	36.2%	25
<i>answered question</i>		69
<i>skipped question</i>		0

2. At what level are you serving?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Battalion/Squadron level	53.6%	37
Regiment/Group level	1.4%	1
Division/Wing level	1.4%	1
Other	43.5%	30
<i>answered question</i>		69
<i>skipped question</i>		0

3. In garrison (i.e. not in the field or deployed), approximately how many hours per week do you spend meeting with AND counseling individual Marines?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0 - 3 hours per week	27.5%	19
4 - 6 hours per week	26.1%	18
7 - 12 hours per week	21.7%	15
Over 13 hours per week	24.6%	17
<i>answered question</i>		69
<i>skipped question</i>		0

4. In garrison (i.e. not in the field or deployed), approximately what percentage of your time is spent dealing with Marines (E-5 and below) who are in distressed marriages or are going through a divorce?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0-25% of ALL my time spent meetings with Marines	75.0%	51
26-50% of ALL my time spent meetings with Marines	13.2%	9
51-75% of ALL my time spent meetings with Marines	10.3%	7
76-100% of ALL my time spent meetings with Marines	1.5%	1
<i>answered question</i>		68
<i>skipped question</i>		1

Appendix C - Survey to Senior Enlisted leaders (primarily First Sergeants) who had attended a senior enlisted course in Quantico

5. In his 1993 Marine Corps Gazette article, "Let's Stop Encouraging the Wrong Behavior," 1stSgt White complained of spending "countless hours" assisting junior Marines with their distressed marriages. In spite of his assistance, many marriages still ended in divorce. Does his statement accurately reflect your experience assisting Marines (E-5 and below) with their distressed marriages?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1stSgt White's statement DOES reflect my experience assisting Marines (E-5 and below) in distressed marriages. No matter how much assistance they receive, most distressed marriages of Marines (E-5 and below) STILL end in divorce.	76.8%	53
1stSgt White's statement DOES NOT reflect my experience assisting Marines (E-5 and below) in distressed marriages. After receiving assistance, most distressed marriages of Marines (E-5 and below) rebound and DO NOT end in divorce.	23.2%	16
<i>answered question</i>		69
<i>skipped question</i>		0

6. Do you see divorce among Marines (E-5 and below) as a significant problem?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I see divorce among Marines (E-5 and below) as a SIGNIFICANT problem.	53.6%	37
I see divorce among Marines (E-5 and below) as a MINOR problem.	34.8%	24
I DO NOT see divorce among Marines (E-5 and below) as a problem.	11.6%	8
<i>answered question</i>		69
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Appendix C - Survey to Senior Enlisted leaders (primarily First Sergeants) who had attended a senior enlisted course in Quantico

7. If the Marine Corps were to implement mandatory PRE-marital training for Marines, (E-5 and below), which of the following would you like to see included in this training? You can select more than one answer. (Assume that this mandatory pre-marital training is legal and would not interfere with the Marine's choice to marry whomever he/she desires.)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
A 15-minute video followed by a chaplain-led Q&A session that would give Marines (E-5 and below) a REALISTIC picture of marriage in the Marine Corps.	49.3%	34
A 10-minute video that would be accessible online which would give the fiancés of Marines (E-5 and below) a REALISTIC picture of marriage in the Marine Corps.	43.5%	30
A mandatory pre-marital checklist for all Marines (E-5 and below) who want to get married which would assist them in making a well-informed decision regarding marriage BEFORE they marry (please see attachment for an example of a pre-marital checklist).	75.4%	52
<i>answered question</i>		69
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Appendix D - Survey to Chaplains on Divorce, E5 and Below (I & II MEF)

1. What is your rank?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
LTJG	6.4%	3
LT	51.1%	24
LCDR	12.8%	6
CDR	25.5%	12
CAPT	4.3%	2
<i>answered question</i>		47
<i>skipped question</i>		0

2. What type of unit are you currently serving?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Division	50.0%	23
Marine Logistics Group	15.2%	7
Marine Air Wing	34.8%	16
<i>answered question</i>		46
<i>skipped question</i>		1

3. At what level are you serving?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Battalion/Squadron level	48.9%	23
Regiment/Group level	36.2%	17
Division/Wing level	14.9%	7
<i>answered question</i>		47
<i>skipped question</i>		0

4. In garrison (i.e. not in the field or deployed), approximately how many hours per week do you spend counseling individual Marines?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0 - 3 hours per week	6.4%	3
4 - 6 hours per week	42.6%	20
7 - 12 hours per week	29.8%	14
Over 13 hours per week	21.3%	10
<i>answered question</i>		47
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Appendix D - Survey to Chaplains on Divorce, E5 and Below (I & II MEF)

5. In garrison (i.e. not in the field or deployed), approximately what percentage of your counseling is dealing with Marines (E-5 and below) who are in distressed marriages or are going through a divorce?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0-25% of ALL my counseling	14.9%	7
26-50% of ALL my counseling	38.3%	18
51-75% of ALL my counseling	40.4%	19
76-100% of ALL my counseling	6.4%	3
<i>answered question</i>		47
<i>skipped question</i>		0

6. In his 1993 Gazette article, "Let's Stop Encouraging the Wrong Behavior," 1stSgt White complained of spending "countless hours" assisting junior Marines with their distressed marriages. In spite of his assistance, many marriages still ended in divorce. Does his statement accurately reflect your experience assisting Marines (E-5 and below) with their distressed marriages?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1stSgt White's statement DOES reflect my experience assisting Marines (E-5 and below) in distressed marriages. No matter how much assistance they receive, most distressed marriages of Marines (E-5 and below) STILL end in divorce.	51.2%	22
1stSgt White's statement DOES NOT reflect my experience assisting Marines (E-5 and below) in distressed marriages. After receiving assistance, most distressed marriages of Marines (E-5 and below) rebound and DO NOT end in divorce.	48.8%	21
<i>answered question</i>		43
<i>skipped question</i>		4

7. Do you see divorce among Marines (E-5 and below) as a significant problem?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I see divorce among Marines (E-5 and below) as a SIGNIFICANT problem.	91.5%	43
I see divorce among Marines (E-5 and below) as a MINOR problem.	8.5%	4
I DO NOT see divorce among Marines (E-5 and below) as a problem.	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		47
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Appendix D - Survey to Chaplains on Divorce, E5 and Below (I & II MEF)

8. If the Marine Corps were to implement mandatory PRE-marital training for Marines (E-5 and below), which of the following would you like to see included in this training? You can select more than one answer. (Assume that this mandatory pre-marital training is legal and would not interfere with the Marine's choice to marry whomever he/she desires.)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
A 15-minute video followed by a chaplain-led Q&A session that would give Marines (E-5 and below) a REALISTIC picture of marriage in the Marine Corps.	62.2%	28
A 10-minute video that would be accessible online which would give the fiancés of Marines (E-5 and below) a REALISTIC picture of marriage in the Marine Corps.	46.7%	21
A mandatory pre-marital checklist for all Marines (E-5 and below) who want to get married which would assist them in making a well-informed decision regarding marriage BEFORE they marry (please see attachment for an example of a pre-marital checklist).	91.1%	41
<i>answered question</i>		45
<i>skipped question</i>		2

Appendix E - Survey to Family Readiness Officers on Divorce, E-5 and Below (I & II MEF)

1. What type of unit are you currently serving?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Division	31.6%	24
Marine Logistics Group	23.7%	18
Marine Air Wing	44.7%	34
<i>answered question</i>		76
<i>skipped question</i>		6

2. At what level are you serving?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Battalion/Squadron level	71.6%	58
Regiment/Group level	13.6%	11
Division/Wing level	7.4%	6
Other	7.4%	6
<i>answered question</i>		81
<i>skipped question</i>		1

3. Approximately how many hours per week do you spend meeting with individual Marines?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0 - 3 hours per week	12.2%	10
4 - 6 hours per week	31.7%	26
7 - 12 hours per week	34.1%	28
Over 13 hours per week	22.0%	18
<i>answered question</i>		82
<i>skipped question</i>		0

4. Approximately what percentage of your time is spent dealing with Marines (E-5 and below) who are in distressed marriages or are going through a divorce?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0-25% of ALL my time meeting with Marines	64.2%	52
26-50% of ALL my time meeting with Marines	28.4%	23
51-75% of ALL my time meeting with Marines	7.4%	6
76-100% of ALL my time meeting with Marines	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		81
<i>skipped question</i>		1

Appendix E - Survey to Family Readiness Officers on Divorce, E-5 and Below (I & II MEF)

5. In his 1993 Gazette article, "Let's Stop Encouraging the Wrong Behavior," 1stSgt White complained of spending "countless hours" assisting junior Marines with their distressed marriages. In spite of his assistance, many marriages still ended in divorce. Does his statement accurately reflect your experience assisting Marines (E-5 and below) with their distressed marriages?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1stSgt White's statement DOES reflect my experience assisting Marines (E-5 and below) in distressed marriages. No matter how much assistance they receive, most distressed marriages of Marines (E-5 and below) STILL end in divorce.	73.4%	58
1stSgt White's statement DOES NOT reflect my experience assisting Marines (E-5 and below) in distressed marriages. After receiving assistance, most distressed marriages of Marines (E-5 and below) rebound and DO NOT end in divorce.	26.6%	21
<i>answered question</i>		79
<i>skipped question</i>		3

6. Do you see divorce among Marines (E-5 and below) as a significant problem?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I see divorce among Marines (E-5 and below) as a SIGNIFICANT problem.	69.5%	57
I see divorce among Marines (E-5 and below) as a MINOR problem.	23.2%	19
I DO NOT see divorce among Marines (E-5 and below) as a problem.	7.3%	6
<i>answered question</i>		82
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Appendix E - Survey to Family Readiness Officers on Divorce, E-5 and Below (I & II MEF)

7. If the Marine Corps were to implement mandatory PRE-marital training for Marines (E-5 and below), which of the following would you like to see included in this training? You can select more than one answer. (Assume that this mandatory pre-marital training is legal and would not interfere with the Marine's choice to marry whomever he/she desires.)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
A 15-minute video followed by a chaplain-led Q&A session that would give Marines (E-5 and below) a REALISTIC picture of marriage in the Marine Corps.	60.5%	49
A 10-minute video that would be accessible online which would give the fiancés of Marines (E-5 and below) a REALISTIC picture of marriage in the Marine Corps.	59.3%	48
A mandatory pre-marital checklist for all Marines (E-5 and below) who want to get married which would assist them in making a well-informed decision regarding marriage BEFORE they marry (please see attachment for an example of a pre-marital checklist).	88.9%	72
<i>answered question</i>		81
<i>skipped question</i>		1

APPENDIX F

PRE-MARRIAGE CHECKLIST (CAMP PENDLETON)

NAME _____ DATE _____

FIANCE'S NAME _____

CONTACT INFO(CELL PHONE) _____

SSN (LAST 4) _____ SECTION _____

BEFORE THE WEDDING

1. **Company Commander** _____

2. **Chaplain's Office** _____
Company Office (760)802-1069

The chaplain will provide an initial pre-marital interview and direct the couple to pre-marital and marriage counseling resources. When possible, your fiancé should be present for the appointment.

3. **Family Readiness Officer** _____
BLDG 210567 (760)725-6438

4. **"Marriage and Money" Class & Budget Construction** _____
BLDG 13150 (760)725-9790

You will attend the "Marriage and Money" class which is offered on the first and third Friday of the month, 0900-1200. No need to call ahead; just show up for the class. After you complete this class, construct a joint budget using the budget form given to you in the class. When you have completed your joint budget, bring your most recent LES (and your fiancé's most recent pay stub if she is working) and current bills for you AND your fiancé (phone, vehicle payments, vehicle insurance, etc.) to assist the certified financial specialist _____ validate your joint budget. Call him at _____ to set up an appointment. _____

CFS Signature

5. **SNCO/LPO-in-Charge** _____
(SNCO/LPO ensures that Marine/Sailor has completed all of checklist items above BEFORE he gets married)

This image shows a full page of blank white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, typical of notebook paper or a document template. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.

POST-MARRIAGE CHECKLIST

IF YOU ARE MARRIED WITH NO CHILDREN, YOU MUST COMPLETE # 1-6 WITHIN THREE WEEKS OF GETTING MARRIED. IF YOU ARE MARRIED WITH CHILDREN OR YOUR WIFE IS PREGNANT, YOU MUST COMPLETE # 1-10 WITHIN THREE WEEKS OF GETTING MARRIED. # 11-16 ARE HIGHLY RECOMMENDED BUT NOT REQUIRED.

1. MARINES-Battalion S-1(BLDG 210567) _____

SAILORS-PSD Bldg H135 _____

(760)725-1308

Marines: Pick up S-1 checklist of forms needed for IPAC BEFORE you go to IPAC. Then bring all of the required forms on the checklist to S-1 for their review. They will then give you a "hall pass" to IPAC. DO NOT GO TO IPAC WITHOUT A HALL PASS FROM S-1.

Sailors: PSD is located across the street from the Naval Hospital emergency room. Before you take your wife to PSD, make sure you have the following forms: Your original marriage certificate, your wife's social security card, a state or federal picture identification card (driver's license, passport, etc.) and your wife's original birth certificate. While at PSD, you need to update your page two, enroll your wife in DEERS and get her a military identification card.

Sailors: Skip down to #4 (TRICARE).

2. Installation Personnel Accounting Center (IPAC)_____

Bldg 210721 (760) 763-6594 (21 Area)

Bldg 1441 (760) 725-5656 (14 Area)

3. Identification Card/DEERS Enrollment _____

Joint Reception Center (BLDG 130132)

(760) 725-2442

Main Gate

(760) 725-2768

Both locations are open Mon through Fri, 0730-1530. The military member must be present unless spouse is in possession of DD form 1172 or General Power of Attorney. To enroll your spouse in DEERS and have an ID card issued for your spouse, Pass & ID Section requires the following original documentation:

- ☐ Original Marriage Certificate
- ☐ One of the following valid forms of identification: Wife's driver's license, state issued ID, passport, or original birth certificate
- ☐ Spouse's social security card
- ☐ Military member's ID card
- ☐ IF DIVORCED AND EX-WIFE WAS A DEPENDENT: Bring ex-wife's SSN and the original certificate of divorce

4. TRICARE _____

Joint Reception Center (Bldg 130132)
Camp Pendleton Naval Hospital (6th FLR. H100)

The hours of operation for the TRICARE office in the Joint Reception Center is 0715-1545. The hours of operation for the TRICARE office in the Camp Pendleton Naval Hospital is 0700-1645. Walk-ins only - you cannot set an appointment. Your wife must accompany you to the TRICARE office. You can obtain dental enrollment forms for dental care for dependents at the TRICARE office.

5. Base Housing _____

98 San Jacinto Rd. (close to Main Gate) (760)725-5995

Office hours of operation are Monday-Friday, 0730-1700. Even if you are planning to live off base, you must contact the housing referral desk to receive information on off-base housing. They will also check your lease for the proper military clauses. Go to www.pendleton.usmc.mil then housing tab for all housing forms and FAQs on housing.

6. Prevention & Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) _____

Marine Family Readiness Center BLDG 1795 (760)725-9052

You will need to call and sign up to attend this class. It is highly encouraged that you attend this course with your wife. If she does not live locally, you will attend this PREP course alone.

SNCO/LPO-in-Charge _____

(SNCO/LPO ensures that Marine/Sailor WITH NO CHILDREN AND WIFE IS NOT PREGNANT has completed #1-6 OF the post-marriage checklist items within three weeks of getting married)

**IF THERE ARE CHILDREN OR A BABY IS EXPECTED, COMPLETE #7-10.
IF NOT, SKIP TO #11.**

7. New Parent Support

BLDG 13150

(760) 725-3884

Hours of operation are M-F, 0730-1600. Learn how to care for children from infancy through age six and get information on parenting classes and support groups.

8. Childcare Resource & Referral

BLDG 13150, Room 121

(760) 725-9723

Hours of operation are Monday through Friday 0700-1730. These are the first people that you must talk to for childcare on and off base. Go to www.mccscp.com/home/family services for FAQs and childcare enrollment form.

9. Women Infants and Children (WIC)

800-500-6411

WIC is a federally-funded health and nutrition program for women, infants, and children. WIC helps families by providing vouchers for buying healthy supplemental foods from WIC-authorized vendors. WIC also offers nutrition education and help finding healthcare and other community services. WIC also offers breast-feeding support.

10. Budgeting for Baby

BLDG 1121

(760)725-5337 then option "6"

The "Budget for Baby" class provides information about the costs associated with a newborn. A layette worth approximately \$80 is given to all Marine and Navy expectant parents who attend the class. Call to register for this class.

SNCO/LPO-in-Charge

(SNCO/LPO ensures that Marine/Sailor has #1-10 of the post-marriage checklist items within three weeks of getting married)

HIGHLY ENCOURAGED BUT NOT REQUIRED:

11. Welcome Aboard Orientation

Joint Reception Center (Bldg 130132) (760) 725-6090

Orientations take place on Wednesdays from 0800-1000. This class provides information about Camp Pendleton and the many opportunities and support services provided on base. Topics covered include: Tri-Care, American Red Cross, Navy/MC Relief Society, Housing Office, Marine and Family Services, Veterinary Services, Joint Legal Assistance, MCCS, LINKS, etc.

12. Joint Legal Assistance Office

BLDG 22161 (760) 725-6172

To change or create a will, go to the Joint Legal Assistance Office on Friday mornings at 0700 (walk-ins only - you cannot make an appointment). You will be given paperwork to fill out and an appointment to see a lawyer the following week. Also, as needed, obtain advice about adoption and/or guardianship issues for blended families. If you desire a Power of Attorney (POA) of any kind, go to battalion legal office. You are not required to obtain a will or POA, but you must be adequately informed in order to make a wise decision.

13. LINKS

BLDG 1795 (760) 725-9052

"LINKS" stands for "Lifestyle, Insights, Networking, Knowledge and Skills." This course is designed to orientate newly-married wives to the Marine Corps and all of the many services provided by Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS). Call for class schedule and to sign up.

14. Navy and Marine Corps Relief Society

BLDG 1121 (760) 725-5337

Hours of operation are Monday-Friday, 0830-1600, by appointment only. Important information will be given to you on pay and allowances and how to prepare your budget for deployment as well as pre-authorization forms. Navy Marine Corps Relief provides interest-free loans and grants for emergency needs. Other services include budget counseling, visiting nurses, and education loans.

15. Personal Financial Institution (Bank) _____

Set up new accounts, authorize access and set up appropriate allotments. A couple should have at least one account for dependent allotments. All financial arrangements should be made with the anticipation of six month (or longer) separation during deployment.

16. Exceptional Family Member Program (if applicable)_____
BLDG 13150 (760)725-5363

The Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) was established in 1987 to assist active duty service member in providing for the special needs of family members before, during and after relocation required by a change of duty assignment to a new location. The program ensures every attempt is made to mesh military career and special needs whenever possible. For more information and enrollment forms, go to www.mccscp.com then "Exceptional Family Member Program".

APPENDIX G

SURVEY RESULTS FOR CLASS: "SECRET TO SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE"

Chaplain Foskett gained this survey information by asking an average of three to five volunteers per class to answer the questions below. Most of the volunteers were Marines, E-5 and below. Chaplain Foskett stressed that each surveyor answer each question candidly and not to place their names anywhere on the surveys in order to ensure anonymity. Over the course of the distribution of this survey (2005-2012), some questions were added and some surveys were accidentally lost. This accounts for the difference in the number of individual responses per each question. These results represent approximately 16 presentations to groups as small as 25 Marines to groups as large as 600.

1. The power point presentation was:

- A. Very good 24/56 (44%)
- B. Good 24/56 (44%)
- C. Okay 7/56 (12%)
- D. Not helpful 0/56 (0%)

2. The "Love Chart" was:

- A. Very good 40/77 (52%)
- B. Good 31/77 (40%)
- C. Okay 4/77 (5%)
- D. Not helpful 2/77 (3%)

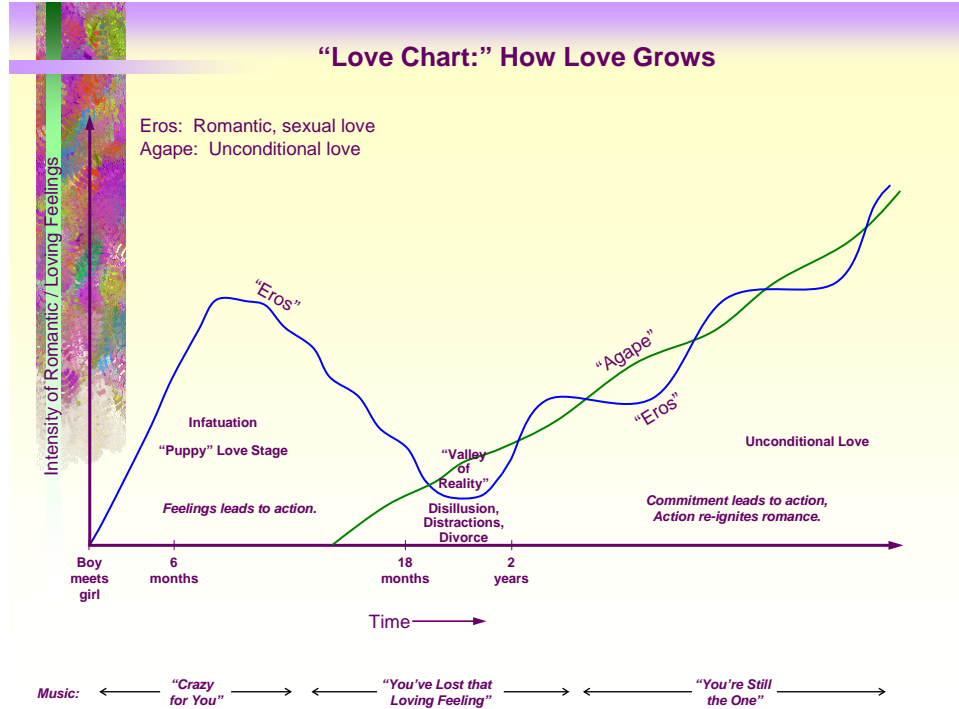
3. Chaplain Foskett's presentation was:

- A. Very good 49/86 (65%)
- B. Good 26/86 (34%)
- C. Okay 1/86 (1%)
- D. Not helpful 0/86 (0%)

4. Circle the best answer that describes you:

- A. This class was excellent – I learned a lot 37/76 (49%)
- B. This class was pretty good - I learned a little 31/76 (41%)
- C. The class was okay – I already knew most of the material 8/76 (10%)
- D. This class was terrible and a waste of time 0/76 (0%)

APPENDIX H



“Bullets” to audience from love chart:

- Every relationship descends into the “valley of reality!” It’s normal!
- Eros helps us to fall in love; Agape keeps us in love.
- Agape can resurrect Eros.
- It’s a good idea NOT to get married until you’ve gone through the “valley of reality” because you will be able to more objective about whether or not you want to spend the rest of your life with your partner.



APPENDIX I

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

3D ASSAULT AMPHIBIAN BATTALION
1ST MARINE DIVISION, FMF
BOX 555574
CAMP PENDLETON, CALIFORNIA 92055-5574

1754
CO
12 Sep 11

BATTALION ORDER 1754

From: Commanding Officer
To: All Personnel of D. Company, 3D Assault Amphibian Battalion

Subj: POLICY ON ENGAGEMENT NOTIFICATION AND PRE/POST-MARRIAGE
ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Ref: (a) SECNAV INSTRUCTION 1754.1B
(b) MCO P1700.24B W/CH 1

Encl: (1) Pre-Marriage Checklist
(2) Post-Marriage Checklist
(3) Statement of Understanding

1. Situation. This policy letter establishes guidelines for the preparation of every enlisted Marine and Sailor E-6 and below, every Marine and Naval Officer 0-2 and below and every Chief Warrant Officer CWO-2 and below considering marriage while serving with 3D Assault Amphibian Battalion.

a. The military has a relatively high failure rate of marriage, which ultimately brings a negative impact to both family and operational readiness. It is necessary to better prepare the Marines and Sailors of this Battalion to deal with the challenges associated with marriage, our military lifestyle, and the unique demands placed on our military family members.

b. The purpose of this policy is not to deny any Marine or Sailor from getting married. The purpose is to ensure each service member is afforded every opportunity to gather the tools necessary to guarantee this lifetime decision starts off in a positive and successful manner.

2. Mission. Recently the Department of the Navy, specifically the Marine Corps, has experienced a significant increase in the number of service members entering into marriage early in their careers. The military also experienced a dramatic increase in the divorce rate among military service members.

a. Dealing with the results of failed relationships have cost the Marine Corps countless man-hours and adversely affected our warfighting capability. The emotional cost of the dissolution of marriages, often with children left in the balance, have resulted in a significant negative impact upon unit morale and readiness.

Subj: POLICY ON ENGAGEMENT NOTIFICATION AND PRE/POST-MARRIAGE
ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

b. Current manpower levels, budget constraints, and high operational commitments have created a situation that is forcing Marines and Sailors to be separated from their families for longer periods. The command must be concerned about the ability of our Marines, Sailors and their wives to cope with the multiple challenges of military life.

c. With these concerns in mind, we must maximize the involvement of the command leadership prior to marriage. All Marines and Sailors will receive annual marriage training from the Battalion Chaplain. Every Enlisted Marine and Sailor E-6 and below, every Marine and Naval Officer O-2 and below and every Chief Warrant Officer CWO-2 and below shall notify their company chain of command 45 days prior to their marriage. They will also complete the Pre-Marriage and Post-Marriage checklists (Enclosures 1 and 2).

d. Upon completion, each checklist will be retained by the respective Platoon Commander.

3. Execution. The following steps will help ensure the Marines and Sailors of D. Company, 3D Assault Amphibian Battalion receive all appropriate assistance:

a. Task

(1) Company Commander

a. Ensure that annual marriage training is conducted by the Battalion Chaplain and a "Statement of Understanding" is signed by every unmarried Marine or Sailor (including new joins). Every Marine or Sailor getting married will be interviewed by his chain-of-command and will be afforded the time to complete all items on the Pre-Marriage and Post-Marriage checklists.

(2) Platoon Commanders and Staff Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge (SNCOIC)

a. Canvas each Marine and Sailor during monthly counseling as to whether they are considering marriage in the near future.

b. Notify their Company Commander if a Marine under their charge plans to get married.

c. Participate in chain-of-command counseling.

d. Give Pre- and Post-Marriage checklist to the Marine or Sailor planning to get married. Schedule an interview with the Marine or Sailor with the Battalion Chaplain to discuss marital issues and the Pre-Marriage and Post-Marriage checklist.

e. Track Pre- and Post-Marriage checklists until completion and file a copy of the signed checklists in the service member's training folder.

(3) Assistant Family Readiness Officer (A-FRO)

a. Contact new spouse to disseminate pertinent information.

(4) Chaplain

a. Explain Pre-Marriage and Post-Marriage checklist to Marine or Sailor.

b. Provide pre-marital counseling as desired by the couple.

c. Provide information to coordinate usage of a chapel if requested.

(5) S-1 Chief

a. Direct S-1 personnel to add block on check-in sheet to ensure initial "Statement of Understanding" has been signed prior to completion of checking-in.

4. Administration and Logistics.

a. None

5. Command and Signal.

a. Signal. This Order is effective the date signed.

b. Command. This Order is applicable to all Company personnel.

H. F. HALL

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- ^{xvii} Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, “2011 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community,” 70.
- ^{xviii} Weiss, 46.
- ^{xix} The national divorce rate in 2006-2010 was between 3.5 – 3.7% while the 2011 divorce rate for the Marine Corps was 3.6%. For national divorce rates, cf. www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/marriage_divorce_tables.htm. For Marine Corps divorce rates, cf. “2011 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community,” 46.
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- ^{xxii} 6.19% is the average number of divorced Marines who committed suicide from 2009-2011 according to data from the “Department of Defense Suicide Event Report: Calendar Year 2011 Annual Report,” 172.
- ^{xxiii} The DoDSER does not distinguish between “failed intimate relationships” that are married and not married. 39.79% is the average number of Marines who committed suicide who had a known history of a failed intimate relationship from 2009-2011 according to data from the “Department of Defense Suicide Event Report: Calendar Year 2011 Annual Report,” 183.

^{xxiv} 82% is the 2009 to 2011 average of the “HX FAILED RELATIONSHIP: Within 90 days (inclusive)” percentage divided by the percentage of “HX FAILED RELATIONSHIP: Yes” according to data from “Department of Defense Suicide Event Report: Calendar Year 2011 Annual Report,” 183.

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^{xxvii} “Holmes-Rahe Stress Inventory,” *American Institute of Stress*, <http://www.stress.org/holmes-rahe-stress-inventory/>.

^{xxviii} This is a three-year average of “COMMUNICATED INTENT” according to data from the “Department of Defense Suicide Event Report: Calendar Year 2011 Annual Report,” 175.

^{xxix} This is a three-year average of “AGE RANGE” according to data from the “Department of Defense Suicide Event Report: Calendar Year 2011 Annual Report,” 172.

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^{xxxvii} Total hours of work hours lost per year due to divorce (34,491) times 0.64 (percentage of divorced male Marines, E-5 and below,) equals 22, 074 hours.

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- lxxx Hope Hodges, “Sham Marriages,” *Marine Corps Times*, March 11, 2013, 24.
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^{lxxxvi} The author is grateful to Chaplain Steven Unger for this idea given expressed during PDTC on June 1, 2012.

^{lxxxvii} Chief of Chaplains, *Chief of Chaplains Guidance for 2012*, Ser NO97/12U-147508, January 17, 2012, Enclosure (1), pg. 1, https://www.nko.navy.mil/portal/chaplaincorps/home?paf_default_view=true.

^{lxxxviii} Commandant of the Marine Corps, *The 35th Commandant of the Marine Corps Commandant's Planning Guidance 2010*, 10,

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^{lxxxix} Department of Defense, "Strengthening Our Military Families," 2.

^{xc} Chaplain Paul Trembley (3rd Marines Regimental Chaplain) December 27, 2012 email regarding the results of his pre-marital program during his 30-month tour with 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines.

^{xci} LtCol Howard "Chip" Hall (Battalion Commander of Third Assault Amphibian Battalion) email interview by the author, December 28, 2012.

^{xcii} Each video Sexual Assault Prevention and Response video vignette cost approximately \$40,000 according to Major Kimberly Mobley (Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Operations Officer), interviewed by the author on December 13, 2012.

^{xciii} Weiss, 46.

^{xciv} 7.7 percent of couples decided not to marry after being interviewed by Chaplain Trembley (25 couples out of 325 couples). 12,560 Marines, E-4 and below, got married in FY12 according to an email response from Gunnery Sergeant Kenneth Emory II (Manpower and Reserve Affairs Data Section) on March 26, 2013. 7.7 percent of all Marines, E-4 and below, who married in FY12 is 967 Marines. 967 Marines times \$22,000 (yearly BAH cost of Corporals and below) is \$21,472,000.

^{xcv} Hetherington, 322.

^{xcvi} Cynthia W. Garney, Wei Hou, Benjamin R. Karney and Amy J. Rauer, "Relationship Risks in Context: A Cumulative Risk Approach to Understanding Relationship Satisfaction," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 70 (December, 2008): 1133-1134, <http://search.proquest.com/>

^{xcvii} Major Jon D. Mohler (Application Development and Program Support Section, Manpower Information Systems Division, United States Marine Corps), email on December 3, 2012.

^{xcviii} M. E. Boone and D. J. Snowden, "A Leader's Framework for Decision Making," *Harvard Business Review*, (November, 2007): 5, 7.

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^{cii} Robert L. Gordon III, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, "Key Findings of FY11 Family Advocacy Program (FAP) Data on Spouse and Child Abuse" in DoD Family Advocacy Program Fiscal Year 2011(FY11) Data, 29 May 2012, 29,

http://www.ncdsv.org/images/DoD_ChildAbuseAndDomesticAbuseDataTrendsFY2001-2011_5-29-2012.pdf?bcsi_scan_CC3264F02ECF7731=1&bcsi_scan_90EAAB26298213F0=0&bcsi_scan_filename=DoD_ChildAbuseAndDomesticAbuseDataTrendsFY2001-2011_5-29-2012.pdf&bcsi_scan_42ED1B0805E22FDA=0&bcsi_scan_filename=DoD_ChildAbuseAndDomesticAbuseDataTrendsFY2001-2011_5-29-2012.pdf

^{ciii} Gallup, Jr., 11.

^{civ} Hetherington, 323.

^{cv} Hetherington, 323.

^{cvi} Blakeslee, 298-300.

^{cvi} Hetherington, 325.

^{cvi} Maggie Gallagher and Linda J Waite, *The Case for Marriage* (New York: Broadway Books, 2000, 52.

^{cix} Gallagher, 77.

^{cx} Gallagher, 79.

^{cxi} Gallagher, 123.

^{cxii} Major Jon Mohler (Data Section, Manpower and Reserve Affairs), email correspondence with the author, December 3, 2012.